

RESULTS ORIENTED PROGRAM APPROVAL

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Preface

In 1991, Vermont's college presidents submitted the *Report of the Vermont Higher Education Council President's Panel on Program Approval* to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (herein VSBPE). This report established the framework for Vermont's Results Oriented Program Approval (herein ROPA), an outcomes-based program approval process. The VSBPE enacted the policies to create such a system that same year.

At the conclusion of the first round of ROPA reviews in 1997, the VSBPE commissioned a study to evaluate the implementation and impact of ROPA on preparation programs and the quality of beginning educators. The findings identified both successes and shortcomings in the first cycle of ROPA reviews.

The VSBPE adopted new ROPA program approval standards and revised guidelines in April 2001. Under the revised ROPA (ROPA-R) process, each educator preparation program developed a theme or vision that provided the foundation for its program and also conducted a self-examination using the following seven program approval standards: I. Opportunities for Standards-based Preparation; II. Collaboration with preK-12 Schools; III. System of Assessment; IV. Candidate Knowledge, Skills and Disposition; V. Commitment to Diversity; VI. Resources; and VII. Institutional and Program Renewal. The inclusion of significant "inputs" and process measures alongside outcomes surrounding candidate preparation helped create a more complete picture of the program and institution throughout the round of ROPA reviews completed in 2006.

An evaluation of the ROPA process and revisions of the current ROPA document began in 2004 and included teacher educators and practitioners from across the state. Prior to beginning the redesign process, the VSBPE agreed to keep the program approval standards consistent for the next round of visits while working to improve the standards' indicators and rubrics and the beginning teacher licensure portfolio. Halfway through this round of ROPA reviews, institutions began to evaluate the review process following each full-program visit. These evaluations, coupled with an analysis of the Review Team reports, provided the Vermont Department of Education (herein the VTDOE) and the Design Team with data to inform revisions. Design Team members also visited educator preparation programs across the state to solicit feedback. The standards, corresponding indicators and rubrics were then reviewed for redundancies, clarity and alignment across the document. Vermont Council of Teacher Educators (VCTE) members and representatives of institutions of higher education were invited to review the revised standards and offer feedback throughout 2006.

The Design Team chose to respond to feedback on the Level I Licensure Portfolio by adjusting the six portfolio entries to better reflect the demands and practices of the field and the current research on quality beginning teacher assessments. VCTE members and representatives of institutions of higher education were invited to review the revised portfolio and offer feedback throughout the fall of 2006 and winter of 2007.

The Design Team carefully reviewed Connecticut's *Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program*, Rhode Island's Portfolio Tasks, and the *California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST)* during the initial portfolio development process. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) portfolio process and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) portfolio assessment structure continue to guide the Design Team's work today. Additionally, the team considered current research on portfolio implementation, the Danielson framework, Richard Stiggins' work

on “assessments *for* learning¹,” and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards requiring programs to assess the performance of their candidates over time using multiple measures.

Finally, it is important to note that the program approval process continues to be informed by NCATE’s review process, the INTASC Program Approval Project (of which Vermont was a member), and Rhode Island’s program approval process.

Goals of the ROPA Process:

- Ensure that ROPA stays *results-oriented*; the assessment of prospective educators’ performance is paramount in the review process. However, the program approval process should also include critical input and process measures and evidence in order to create a more complete picture of the programs and institution.
- Ensure the program approval process is a meaningful learning experience that encourages a program or institution’s continual growth.
- Ensure that the preparation of educators is recognized as an institution-wide responsibility that requires the involvement of liberal arts and sciences departments and does not rest solely with the education department.
- Ensure educator preparation programs comply with current state regulations (especially those related to the endorsement requirements) and federal laws and rules.
- Provide training on the ROPA process to educators who will serve on Review Teams to ensure consistent, reliable assessments.
- Ensure a licensure portfolio structure that is based on current research and on best practice.
- Ensure reliability across licensure portfolio assessments by establishing clear performance standards, utilizing a common set of scoring rubrics, and providing training for portfolio assessors.
- Use ROPA to evaluate alternate routes to licensure.
- Use ROPA to evaluate new programs for licensure.
- Support institutions in the implementation of the revised ROPA process.

¹ Richard Stiggins, “Specifications for a Performance-based Assessment System for Teacher Preparation,” Assessment Training Institute, July 5, 2000.

ROPA Overview

I. Introduction

The VSBPE has the responsibility of evaluating and approving educator preparation programs at the undergraduate and graduate level and alternate routes to licensure. Candidates who complete any approved programs, who are recommended by their program and who meet examination requirements (e.g., Praxis or its equivalent) are eligible for licensure in Vermont.

The VSBPE approves licensure programs that have successfully demonstrated the capacity to provide prospective educators with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and dispositions needed to foster all students' growth. Unless otherwise specified, program approval is valid for six years. An external Review Team must review programs seeking continued state approval; this process is briefly described below and detailed in Chapter 3. Institutions seeking to add new programs must also submit a detailed proposal for the new program to the VSBPE (see Chapter 6).

II. The Program Approval Process

One year prior to the expiration of a program's approval, the VSBPE will send a letter to the president of the institution notifying her or him of the approaching expiration date. The institution then suggests possible dates for the external review to the VSBPE. The VSBPE, through the VTDOE, will work with the institution to arrive at a mutually acceptable date for the review and on-site visit.

Once a date is set, institutions are responsible for the creation and submission of an Institutional Portfolio. The Institutional Portfolio is the primary document through which the Review Team becomes acquainted with the institution, its programs, and candidates.

The visit of the Review Team is meant to confirm the background information and evidence submitted in the Institutional Portfolio. A summary of the report of the findings of the Review Team will be shared with the institution at the conclusion of the visit with a final report submitted to both the VSBPE and the institution. The VSBPE has the final authority to approve an institution's educator preparation programs based on the findings of the Review Team. Please note that assistance will be made available to the institution throughout the program approval process.

III. Alternate Routes to Licensure

Alternate routes to licensure will also be assessed through the ROPA review process. The program will be measured in terms of the seven program approval standards, though specific indicators may be revised or found not applicable. Upon scheduling a program review, an alternate route to licensure program must meet with a representative of the VSBPE and/or the VTDOE to formally review the seven standards and to determine the appropriate indicators and supporting evidence.

Fourteen Vermont institutions of higher education have approved educator preparation programs. Vermont's alternate route to licensure, Peer Review, is also an approved program. A list of Vermont approved programs is provided in the chart that follows.

IV. Vermont Approved Programs

College or University	Programs Approved Through
Middlebury College	2008
Castleton State College	2009
Goddard College	2009
University of Vermont	2009
Champlain College	2010
College of St. Joseph	2010
Green Mountain College	2010
Norwich University	2010
Lyndon State College	2011
Saint Michael's College	2011
Vermont College of Union Institute and University	2011
School for International Training	2012
Johnson State College	2012
Bennington College	2012
Peer Review	2012